

Remarks

The specification has been revised to correct formalistic errors on pages 3, 4 and 5.

Independent claim 1 and dependent claim 8 have been amended. The substance of claim 9 has been inserted into claim 1, and claim 9 has been cancelled.

Consequently, claims 1-8 and 10 are presented for consideration on their merits; claim 11, is also presented, although such claim was allowed in the first Office Action.

Original claim 9 was indicated to be allowable in content, so the inclusion of the limitation that the leaching step is carried out at 1 atmosphere, or less, into claim 1, should render claim 1 novel, unobvious and allowable in content. Claims 2-8 and 10 also depend from base claim 1, further limit same, and thus should be patentable, as well. Claim 11 was allowed in the first Office Action.

The term "the partially oxidized material," is now fully supported in the text of claim 1, as amended.


Claim 8 has been amended to indicate that the claimed temperature range is expressed in degrees Celsius.

Claims 1-8 and 10-11, as presently constituted, as presently constituted, are patentable in content when contrasted with the disclosures of Jones (U.S. Patent 5,869,012) and Hourn (U.S. Patent 6,833,021). The material distinctions between applicant's process, and known processes as disclosed in the cited prior art, is acknowledged at page 5 of the Office Action. The claims of record now affirmatively assert the parameters of applicants' process, such as pressure, temperature, amount of oxidation, etc. that distinguish over known processes employed for similar purposes.

Prompt, and favorable, consideration of the Amendment is believed to be in order, and early allowance of the claims of record is warranted.

Respectfully submitted,

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